

**Minutes**  
**Delaware Council of Faith-Based Partnerships (DCFBP)**  
**Tuesday, March 4, 2014**  
**1-3 pm**  
**Northern New Castle County Adult Probation and Parole Office**  
**314 Cherry Lane**  
**New Castle, DE 19720**

**Attendees:** Jen Hill, Douglas D.Gerdts (Chair), Flora McConkie, Max Joseph Wolf, John Moore, Kenny Foster.

**Guests:** Karl Hines, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Correction and Gail Stallings-Minor, Community Relations Chief, Office of the Commissioner.

The meeting was called to order by Doug at approx. 1:12pm.

**Lengthy, open discussion on a variety of issues related to Department of Correction.**

Doug provided overview of Council for Mr. Hines and Ms. Minor, including four areas of focus. Mr. Hines indicated that all four areas overlap with Department of Correction concerns.

Mr. Hines explained that by executive order, Governor Markell formed a task force of five department heads (Correction, Health and Social Services, Labor, Education, and Housing) to work together on reducing recidivism by fifty percent. The result is I-ADAPT, Individual Assessment Discharge Planning Team, which begins addressing needs such as housing, employment, education, ID cards, substance abuse services, and medical services -- six months prior to an inmate's release. The program is voluntary; currently, about half of inmates participate. Organizations that are actively involved in recidivism efforts are invited to present workshops on their services to soon-to-be-released inmates. The task force has resulted in increased awareness of needs and cooperation between state agencies; they continue to adapt programs to fulfill needs.

Members of the community – faith groups, non-profits, businesses – are invited to be part of the I-ADAPT program by attending special group meetings held regularly in each county. Most previous attempts to engage the community have resulted in an initial interest and attendance at meetings – followed by loss of interest and low participation.

Housing, employment, education and transportation needs are ongoing issues, and new challenges are constant. For instance, the new GED process is expensive and requires internet access. Inmates need to develop realistic expectations of the kind of employment they will be able to obtain. Often, there are restrictions on where they can work and what they can do. Kenny mentioned a career assessment/skill set program useful to inmates. Financial literacy, time management, decision-making skills are also great needs.

Commissioner Coupe has asked the Department to focus on job training and entrepreneurship. Expanded auto repair programs have been proposed, along with new training opportunities and certifications being implemented in culinary arts, landscaping, aqua farming, horticultural, honey production, etc. Only a small percentage of prison population qualify to participate. Participation occurs during the last six months of incarceration. Goal is to obtain funding to pay inmates wages (to be saved for future expenses, such as rent). As a side note, one of the programs produces firewood (from state parks) that is donated to those in need; faith leaders may recommend recipients.

Ms. Minor suggested the Council hold a meeting at their Georgetown facility to take a tour and learn more about their work release programs. Max mentioned many problems with the work release program, including transportation issues, attitudes of negativity, and lack of flexibility on scheduling. He would like to see a restructuring of the program, with increased support and encouragement for participants.

Reminder that programs can only go so far. People have to be ready to change their lives.

Delaware is a unified state – there are no county or municipal jails – all are handled by Department of Correction. There is a revolving door problem among those who violate parole and have misdemeanor charges, with brief periods of incarceration that do not allow for education or training opportunities.

Trauma-informed care is being piloted at the women's prison.

Justice Reimbursement Act of 2012 requires reduction in recidivism, assessment of treatment programs, and implementation of best practices.

Mr. Hines recognized On the Way Home and other programs that provide nurturing and tough love and the desire to replicate such programs state-wide. Max noted that funding such programs is a challenge -- extremely difficult. The support of faith communities – with mentors, transitional housing, emergency food and clothing, etc. - is appreciated. Mr. Hines commented, “We’re trying to bring about cultural change, to do things right, for the right reasons. We need you and can’t do it without you.” He reflected on the destruction of families as a result of incarceration and the effect on multiple generations. The Department wants to keep the community engaged in recidivism efforts.

Access to prisons discussed, including need to streamline and standardize process. Ms. Minor indicated that the Department is aware of the problem and is working to improve it. Max mentioned that small group meetings and individual mentoring efforts are usually most effective, but that some prisons prefer large-group meetings (200+). Ms. Minor explained that some prisons are handling far more capacity than they were designed to accommodate, and that often, there simply is not space or necessary security to allow frequent individual or small group meetings. Each facility has unique issues.

She also explained that Commissioner Coupe is very interested in meeting with faith groups active in prison ministry. He has initiated meetings for faith leaders and volunteers in each

facility, to get to know them, thank them, and to respond to concerns. Max mentioned that the Commissioner attended an On the Way Home dinner and stayed afterwards, visiting with former inmates.

Max mentioned difficulties with receiving timely responses to emails and phone calls as faith leaders/volunteers contact the Department. Ms. Minor suggested contacting the Family Services Coordinator, Chelsea Hicks, at (302) 857-5470, with such issues. A new method of handling questions and concerns will be implemented in the next few months.

Access to inmate information is another area of concern. Faith groups would like to be in contact with those about to be released (six months prior), but privacy issues do not permit it. Inmates must agree to participate in particular programs before such information can be released.

On the issue of housing, Ms. Minor mentioned DITCH, Delaware Interagency Consortium on Housing.

Current prison population is 7,000; probation/parole population is 21,000.

**Update on funding from Jen.** Funding from State is unlikely. Council could opt to become a 501c3/non-profit, but Council would become separate entity, and no longer function as a State Board/Commission. (Every other Board/Commission is under the umbrella of a state agency.) Max suggested we may not need funding, if we continue to function as we have. Flora confirmed, indicating that members of the Council could rotate responsibility for providing funding for a certain time period. (For instance, for two years, a particular Council member and/or their house of worship could cover the costs of ink and paper – approx. \$100 per year.) John mentioned a change in the method United Way uses to provide funding through faith communities, should the Council wish to pursue that option.

**New business.** As part of the Nemours Grant, John provided list of School Wellness Committee meetings for New Castle and Sussex Counties. Committees are seeking community members to participate. Leaders and members from the faith community are encouraged to volunteer. Wellness Committees make decisions on nutrition, physical activity, mental health issues, etc. for the schools they serve.

When Council meetings need to be cancelled, travel times of members should be considered. Ideally, cancellation notice should be provided in early morning (rather than a couple of hours before meeting).

**Minutes of February 4, 2014 meeting approved.**

**Next meeting.** Tuesday, April 1, 2014, 1-3 pm. (Location TBA.)

Meeting adjourned at approx. 3:10 pm.

Submitted by Flora McConkie, DCFBP Secretary, March 7, 2014.